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Historian

Preserving the past, present, and future of the Oakwood Community • Summer 2016

The Old Barn Club: "Famous Over this Entire Country" --David Schmidt

Sharp-eyed motorists traveling along West Dorothy Lane may wonder about the origins of the narrow, gated lane that winds northward into the wooded embankment just downhill of the Ridgeway Road Bridge.¹ This lonely turnoff is an artifact from bygone years when quiet country lanes and bridal paths curved through the southern end of Hills and Dales Park and led to a popular dining and recreational facility known as the Old Barn Club (Figure 1).

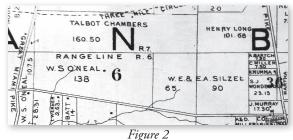
The clubhouse served as the hub of local social activities during the earliest years of Hills and Dales Park and was formed ca. 1907 when John H. Patterson directed the unconventional assembly and renovation of two of Van Buren Township's earliest buildings.

Hills and Dales Park resulted in large part from Mr. Patterson's enthusiasm for horseback riding. When he was a young



Figure 1

man he enjoyed exploring what was then the scenic and remote countryside to the south and west of the small Village of Oakwood. The natural beauty of the area led to Mr. Patterson's interest in preserving it as a park, so during 1906 he made arrangements to purchase the property, which consisted mainly of large parcels of farmland belonging to the O'Neil and Silzel families (Figure 2).



The Silzel Farm, which included the property where the Old Barn Club later stood, had long been owned by a family named Coblenz² and, when Mr. Patterson purchased the property, local citizens still referred to it as the "Old

Coblenz Farm." The farm included at its southern end a two-story house that stood on high ground to the north-northeast of the present-day intersection of Patterson Boulevard and West Dorothy Lane. A large barn – in the "bank barn" style common in southwestern Ohio – stood imbedded in the hillside to the northwest of the farmhouse. A stone foundation surrounded the lower level of the barn, which housed animals and opened to a feeding lot on the downhill side. The main level of the barn included a hay loft and opened to the upper side of the hill.

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Message from the President

THE OAKWOOD HISTORICAL SOCIETY BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- 2016 -

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Get more info on our website or give us a call! www.oakwoodhistory.org 937-299-3793 It has been wonderful to see so many of you during these past few months which have been busy with opportunities to be involved with The Oakwood Historical Society.

Some of the events you will find mentioned in this edition of the *Historian* include *Wright at Home*, third graders learning about Oakwood and how people used to live, *That Day in May* parade, and the ending to *That Day in May* at The Homestead, with wine, cheese and good company.

We have reached out and worked jointly with several other organizations and researchers on tours and in the Archives of TOHS. This winter and spring hundreds of people have attended our *Far Hills Speaker Series* at the Wright Memorial Library. So far there have been five speakers, all of whom presented fascinating information about Oakwood and our environs. The speaker series is now on hiatus for the summer but will start up again in September.

In addition to those who attend events, we continue to hear from you via emails, phone calls and personal contacts. People are looking for information on their homes, their ancestors, the growth of the city, the architecture, identifying an object...and sometimes they want to volunteer! All of these contacts are welcome.

Enjoy your summer, keep up with us at **www.oakwoodhistory.org**, in the display window at the Wright Memorial Library and on Facebook. Visit our newsletter sponsors, whose information can be found inside the back page of the newsletter. Finally, please come to our *Classics on the Lawn* and *Open House* on August 21, where you will see a variety of antique classic vehicles on display and can get in that tour of the homestead you have always been meaning to do.

Make History With Us! Carol Holm, President

Classic Cars to Converge at The Homestead

On Sunday, August 21st, The Oakwood Historical Society will host its 6th annual *Classics on the Lawn* Car Show and *Open House* from noon to 4:00 PM on the grounds of *The Long-Romspert Homestead House Museum*, 1947 Far Hills Ave. in Oakwood.

Admission is free, *The Homestead* will be open for tours and a lunch by Oakwood's own *Central Perc European Café* will be available at a nominal fee. The lawn will be adorned with many of the Dayton area's finest and most colorful classic, original, restored and special interest automobiles from museums, car clubs, collectors and private owners. It will, truly, be a journey through automotive history and a photographic opportunity!

Due to limited parking, guests are encouraged to park on side streets or enjoy a summer afternoon's walk or bike ride to *The Homestead*.

Come and enjoy the cars, the food and one of Oakwood's oldest and finest homes on **Sunday, August 21st**!



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That Day In May (TDIM) Events

Our float in the *That Day In May* parade was a lot of fun. We had six people in costumes throwing candy to the crowd from our float. Many thanks to John and MJ Gray for providing the old tractor, hay wagon and driver Patrick who managed the float down Shafor and around a few tight turns! Board member Brian Mettling drove his antique car as well – people love seeing that car!

The Historical Society's: A Taste of Wine and Cheese event held at the end of the day was well attended. There was a good variety of nibbles, both savory and sweet. We heard many great comments about the food, the wines (and craft beers). We were very pleased with the wide age range of guests varying from college age to young parents to mid-career adults to retired folks. Many parked in the neighborhood or walked over - one group even arrived on bicycles! Arrow Wine was a great partner again this year, providing a server and the specially chosen assortment of beverages.

There were a number of guided tours of the house given. Many times we heard,

"I've lived in Oakwood for years & *never* been inside the house!"





Harman & Smith Third Grade Classes learn about Oakwood's History

Each year, Oakwood third grade students have a study unit that teaches them about their community, and we at *The Oakwood Historical Society* are part of this. In late April over the course of two days, all the third grade classes at Smith Elementary School took turns walking to *The Oakwood Historical Society's Long-Romspert Homestead* where they learned about the history of Oakwood, toured the house to learn about how early Oakwood settlers lived, and got to experience old fashioned gadgets, games and clothing. Among their favorites were clay marbles, hoops & sticks rolling on the brick sidewalk, trying out an old-fashioned telephone and learning about washtubs, washboards and heavy irons.

In early May, Harman Elementary School students, being a greater distance from *The Homestead*, received a visit from TOHS in their school auditorium. We loaded up and ferried the same items used with Smith students to Harman. As part of the activities we presented a short slide show of how things looked in Oakwood in years past. The kids are always amazed at bygone Oakwood, and this time was no different. Boxing at recess on the playground? A movie theater downtown for only a nickel admission? A telephone with a cord!



It is always fun to put some of our collections on display for the students and to hear their amazed responses.

Many thanks to the teachers and parent volunteers who helped make the visits go so well!

Wright at Home: A Crowd Pleaser

With the recent new book on the Wright Brothers by David McCullough, and the visit to Hawthorn Hill by movie star Tom Hanks who will be involved in filming it, the story of the Wrights has garnered quite a bit of interest among locals as well as those coming from a distance. As a result, this was the largest event yet and sold out with 578 visitors. This event started three years ago, on the hundredth anniversary of the day the Wrights moved into their new Oakwood home, hence *Wright at Home*.





On April 24 at Hawthorn Hill, we joined with *Dayton History* and conducted tours both inside the mansion and around the neighborhood where guests learned about other industrialists who lived nearby with their own interesting stories. A place was found in one of the old garages for Stephen Wright to present old home movies and reminiscences of his famous Wright ancestors. Even the old sled which has become famous in the telling of the Wright

Brothers' childhood inventions was on display. This was a fundraiser for both non-profit organizations. We would like to thank *Dayton History* for making this event happen and inviting *The Oakwood Historical Society* to partner with them again. It's a great way to share our research with a wider audience.

Parks Walking Tours Announced!

Wright Memorial Public Library and *The Oakwood Historical Society* are partnering together to present a walking tour of Oakwood's remarkable nature trails located in the heart of our community. The tour is scheduled for Saturday, July 30th and will include the geology, history and nature aspects of Loy Garden, Elizabeth Gardens and Friendship Park at Houk Stream. Walking shoes are suggested!

Watch local media for more information or visit **www.oakwoodhistory.org** for updates on this and other events of *The Oakwood Historical Society.*







The Old Barn Club: "Famous Over this Entire Country" *(cont.)* After purchasing the "Old Coblenz Farm," Mr. Patterson established a clubhouse on the site:

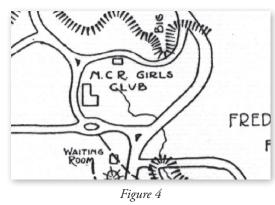
Mr. Patterson ordered the barn moved intact and joined to the [western side of the farmhouse]. The first floor of the barn was cleared of partitions and [formed] the main floor of the clubhouse. Windows were cut on all three sides, commanding a superb view of the valley. A large fireplace was built on the east side of the [clubhouse's meeting] room and connecting doors opened to the dwelling house beyond.³

Above the meeting room, the barn's former hay loft was partitioned into bedrooms for the use of female club members and guests. Entrances to the club stood on the facility's southern and western sides. Soon after its completion the clubhouse began serving as a gathering site for the scattered citizens of the surrounding Van Buren Township and Village of Oakwood. An early newspaper article refers to the clubhouse as the "Dorothy Lane Clubhouse," where local citizens met during October of 1908 to discuss a taxation amendment.⁴

During 1910 the newly-formed Dayton Automobile Club leased the clubhouse from the National Cash Register Company as a venue for luncheons and other social events (Figure 3).⁵ The largest gathering at the "Dayton Automobile Country Club" occurred Saturday, September 21, 1912 when members of the Cincinnati Automobile Club formed a caravan of 192 automobiles and journeyed to the clubhouse, which was decorated with banners, streamers, and signs welcoming the group from the Queen City.⁶ The popularity of the facility led the Dayton Power and Light Company to establish rail car service to the clubhouse beginning July, 1911. This "Hills and Dales Railway" made regular round trips from Third and Main Streets in downtown Dayton.⁷



Figure 3



During 1913 the Automobile Country Club was renamed the "NCR Girls Club," with female employees of the National Cash Register Company given exclusive privileges of the clubhouse and grounds. This designation of the clubhouse (Figure 4) was included on a map drafted ca. 1914 by Charlton Putnam, a local civil engineer. The map, which illustrates in detail the early layout of Hills and Dales Park, was included as an attachment inside the back cover of August Foerste's 1915 book Geology of Dayton and Vicinity.⁸ The book gives special emphasis to the landforms standing in and around Hills and Dales Park.

The year 1915 marked the beginning of Sunday afternoon concerts at the clubhouse. The concerts were highly popular and, weather permitting, held in the natural amphitheater formed by the curving hillside behind the clubhouse. This outdoor entertainment area included a stage, benches to accommodate an audience of several hundred, a projection booth for showing silent "motion pictures," and a nearby dance pavilion.

During May, 1915 the NCR Girls Club was renamed the "Hills and Dales Club," with memberships open to "all persons of good character." Membership rates were \$1.00 per year, with 10¢ per day being charged for guests or children. Along with the availability of lunch and dinner, advantages of clubhouse membership included: "country air, tennis, dancing, dinner parties, a meeting place, tea corner, picnics, musicals, Sunday afternoon choir service, current topic talks, croquet, five-cent [rail] car service,⁹ excursions, dining pavilion, overnight lodging for women, special entertainments, and a free sunset."¹⁰

The Old Barn Club: "Famous Over this Entire Country" (cont.)

A 1916 newspaper article described an overnight visit to the Hills and Dales Club from the perspective of a young lady:

It was a radiantly beautiful summer night that some of us girls picked for our wonderful adventure at the Hills and Dales Club. We went out early in the afternoon and sought the shade and calm of the trees which make the place so unusually attractive to those of us who have been accustomed to the heat and dust of the city. Well, we were all in fine spirits by 5 o'clock, enjoying every minute of the day. We saw the great red orb of the day go down behind the western hills; saw the daylight die, as the poet would say, and as night grew on apace the dinner bell called us to one of the finest little dinners I have ever enjoyed. . .

Then night had come and we went out of doors – out under the open sky with the great canopy of heaven dotted with the millions of stars, as a covering to the earth. The crickets sang their evening song and the quiet of the evening enrapts us. . . . The thing enthralled all of us, and we all sat up until away after 10 o'clock just looking at the big world wrapped in darkness and mystery. How I should have loved to watch the whole night through – it was all so wonderful . . .

And the night wore on . . . and finally we surrendered to the passion for sleep and retired. The night, then, was all too short, and before we knew it the sunbeams were rushing through the windows of our sleeping room, and we welcomed the new day. It was so beautiful, . . . so restful, so like the life I always thought I wanted to live, that I count the hours that must [pass] before I visit the club again. . .¹¹

During July 1918 John H. Patterson's daughter, Dorothy Patterson Judah hosted a dinner and dance at the Hills and Dales Club for several hundred local soldiers, with vehicles from the National Cash Register providing transportation to and from Wilbur Wright and McCook Fields.¹² The year 1918 also marked Mr. Patterson's donation of the "core" of Hills and Dales Park – which includes the approximate modern boundaries of the park – to the city of Dayton. Mr. Patterson retained ownership of much of the surrounding property, although he continued to make it publicly accessible as part of the park. This included the site of the Hills and Dales Club and adjacent land in modern-day west Oakwood.

During 1919 the Hills and Dales Club was renamed the "Old Barn Club," with services expanded by the operation of stables that served the growing local interest in horseback riding. The club was open seasonally from Memorial Day through October and operated by a board of directors chaired by Hattie Shafor,¹³ who was very well known and influential in local social circles. Mrs. Shafor's board of directors included those in charge of membership, Sunday afternoon concerts, literary teens, Saturday evening dances, Tuesday evening dances, entertainment, and informal Saturday afternoon talks.¹⁴

The Old Barn Club reached its peak popularity during the early 1920s. Headlines in the Dayton Daily News stated the "Fame of 'Old Barn Club' Extends Over This Entire Country"¹⁵ and "Average Attendance Now Runs Above 1000 Each Week".¹⁶ The newspaper also published programs for the Old Barn Club's Sunday afternoon concerts which, during 1920, had an "average attendance of . . . between 600 and 700, although on one Sunday there were 1500 present and on another 1200."¹⁷

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During 1922 Kingsley "King" Tullis, who managed riding stables at the Dayton Country Club, also began managing the stables at the Old Barn Club. Mr. Tullis soon formed a children's riding club at the Old Barn Club Stables and became well known for teaching horsemanship to young people. Enthusiasm for horseback riding in Hills and Dales Park flourished throughout the 1920s, with popular destinations including the Adirondack-style camps (Figure 5) that stood throughout the park, a natural spring that flowed into a log trough just south of the Old Barn Club and, for meals, the Old Barn Club's dining room. A newspaper article from 1922 provided an account of a visit to the Old Barn Club from the perspective of a horseback rider:



Figure 5

We were out riding the other morning and stopped in at the Old Barn Club about noon, riding clothes and all. We asked if it were possible to get lunch and we found we could be served if we would wait just a little while. Of course, you should telephone ahead and make reservations but this is what we had: delicious clear bullion, a half chicken, spaghetti with cheese, new peas, plates of little biscuits and raspberry jam, a salad of cucumber and pineapple in gelatin, homemade ice cream with chunks of peaches in it and cake. It was served in a delightfully cool green, white and black dining room with bowls of berries for table decorations.¹⁸

During March of 1922 Mr. Patterson praised the work of the Old Barn Club:

"The Old Barn club is like a flower half blown" said John H. Patterson Friday evening at Far Hills where he entertained the members of the Board of Directors of the club at dinner and discussed with them plans for the coming summer. "I hope that we may live to see it unfolded for I feel that it will grow more and more beautiful each year."¹⁹

Unfortunately, Mr. Patterson passed away during May, 1922 – less than two months after that meeting. He bequeathed to his children (Frederick and Dorothy) most of his estate, which included the land outside the portion of Hills and Dales Park he donated to the city of Dayton in 1918.

Oakwood and the surrounding area grew rapidly during the 1920s and the land surrounding the "core" of Hills and Dales Park greatly increased in value. During the middle 1920s Mr. Patterson's children began selling parcels of the former parkland, beginning with the valuable property along Ridgeway Road in west Oakwood. As a result of local growth and development, the Old Barn Club eventually ceased being a remote country destination. The 1920s also saw a gradual shift in social activities from the seasonally-operated Old Barn Club to the East Oakwood Club (the modern-day Oakwood Community Center), which was built in 1919 and available for year-round use. Further, the increased affordability of automobiles during the 1920s provided local citizens with greater mobility and wider options for venues providing dining, recreation, and entertainment.

By the 1930s these factors had led to a significant decrease in popularity of the Old Barn Club. An article appearing in the Journal Herald during 1932 announced that a wrecking firm was to raze the club building and stated: "The clubhouse was continued in operation until the past summer, when it ceased operation. It was never a money making proposition but Mr. Patterson did not aim to make it so and always gladly took care of the deficit."²⁰

During 1933 the government of Van Buren Township directed the construction of a stone drinking fountain and horse watering trough at the site of the Old Barn Club's log drinking trough. This "Old Barn Club Spring" was dedicated in memory of John H. Patterson during 1934 at a ceremony attended by Frederick Patterson and local government officials. The structure stood through the remainder of the 1930s as a landmark and gathering point near the intersection of Patterson Blvd. and West Dorothy Lane.

By agreement with Frederick Patterson, "King" Tullis continued operating the Old Barn Club Stables until early 1940, when the land where the Old Barn Club had stood was sold for development. This sale prompted Mr. Tullis to move the horses residing at the Old Barn Club Stables to stables at the Dayton Country Club.²¹ He later operated the King Tullis Riding School until his retirement in 1962.

The Old Barn Club: "Famous Over this Entire Country" (cont.)

The stone lookout tower (Figure 6) in Hills and Dales Park stands a few hundred yards to the north of the former location of the Old Barn Club. It may not be coincidental that construction of the tower began during early 1940 at about the same time the clubhouse property was sold. An article published in the Journal Herald on February 16, 1941 stated the newly-completed tower required "a year to build and was constructed of stones salvaged by the city from condemned buildings."²² An extensive review of historical documents suggests the Old Barn Club was the only building in the immediate vicinity that both: (1) contained a large volume of the same type of rock used for the tower;²³ and (2) had recently been razed as of 1941. Park visitors gazing at the old lookout tower may very well be viewing stone from the foundation of a clubhouse that served countless guests during the golden age of Hills and Dales Park.



Figure 6

<u>Notes</u>

¹This abandoned lane, which is now on private property, winds northward from the intersection of West Dorothy Lane and Big Hill Road. An earlier alignment of the lane is shown running left to right in the upper-central portion of Figure 4.

²Joseph Coleman purchased the property from the U.S. government during 1815. He sold it to Adam Coblenz during 1825. Adam Coblenz' heirs sold the property during 1886 to Washington Silzel. John H. Patterson purchased the Silzel Farm for \$30,000 during 1906.

³The Hills and Dales Club, 1916?, NCR Corp., Dayton, Ohio, 8 p.

⁴Dayton Daily News, October 23, 1908, p. 18.

⁵Dayton Daily News, May 16, 1910, p. 2; June 17, 1910, p. 17; June 20, 1910, p. 5. The Dayton Automobile Club maintained a city office in the Algonquin Hotel in downtown Dayton.

⁶Dayton Daily News, September 21, 1912, p. 14.

⁷The Hills and Dales Railway ran southward from downtown Dayton along Route 48, diverged southwestward just north of the modern-day Pointe Oakwood area, continued along South Dixie Avenue, turned eastbound at West Dorothy Lane, and ended at a small waiting station that stood northwest of the intersection of West Dorothy Lane and Patterson Blvd. Additional information about the history of this general route is available in Keenan, J., 1974, Cincinnati and Lake Erie Railroad, Golden West Books, San Marino, California, 223 p.

⁸Foerste, A. F., 1915, An Introduction to the Geology of Dayton and Vicinity, with Special Reference to the Gravel Ridge Area South of the City, Including Hills and Dales and Moraine Park, Hollenbeck Press, Indianapolis, 210 p. (See *Historian*, Summer, 2015 for biographical information about August Foerste.)

⁹During ca. 1916 this rail car service ran every 20 minutes throughout the day from downtown Dayton, which attests to the popularity of the Hills and Dales Club and the nearby NCR Country Club (present-day Community Golf Club).

¹⁰Dayton Daily News, May 28, 1916, p. 16.

¹¹Dayton Daily News, September 10, 1916, p. b1.

¹²Dayton Daily News, July 28, 1918, p. 8.

¹³Hattie Shafor was married to Walter Shafor, who platted and developed portions of east Oakwood and donated Shafor Park to the city.

Notes (cont.)

¹⁴Dayton Daily News, May 21, 1922, p. b1. The Saturday afternoon talks were arranged by Charlotte Reeve Conover, who was a noted local historian and prolific author about the early history of Dayton.

¹⁵Dayton Daily News, August 14, 1921, p. b1.

¹⁶Dayton Daily News, January 15, 1922, p. c1.

¹⁷Dayton Daily News, November 7, 1920, p. c1.

¹⁸Dayton Daily News, July 18, 1922, p. 20.

¹⁹Dayton Daily News, March 12, 1922, p. a1.

²⁰Journal Herald, September 25, 1932, p. c9.

²¹Journal Herald, March 3, 1940, p. 6.

²²Journal Herald, February 16, 1941, p. d13.

²³These building stones were probably quarried during the early to middle 1800s in the old Beavertown area of modern-day Kettering. See *Historian*, Fall, 2015 for more information about this type of rock and its local quarrying history.

Figure Captions

Figure 1. Postcard of the Old Barn Club issued ca. 1920. (Dayton Metro Library)

Figure 2. Map of local land holdings during 1895. Modern-day roads include: West Dorothy Lane (east-west near the bottom of the image); South Dixie Avenue (north-south at left); and Far Hills Avenue (north-south at right). (New Atlas Map, Montgomery County, Ohio, 1895)

Figure 3. The Dayton Automobile Country Club ca. 1912. This view is looking northeastward at the intersection of Patterson Blvd. and West Dorothy Lane. Oakwood residents Pierce and Caroline Schenck are in the front seat of the automobile. (Pierce Schenck, Jr.)

Figure 4. Detail of a map drafted ca. 1914 identifying the L-shaped clubhouse as the "N.C.R. Girls Club." The map is oriented with east in the "up" direction. West Dorothy Lane, which runs top to bottom toward the right of the image, has since been realigned to reduce its curvature. (Foerste, 1915)

Figure 5. Hand-tinted postcard of horseback riders and other guests at Round Camp. Note that some of the background figures remain in black and white.

Figure 6. Stone lookout tower standing along Patterson Blvd. in Hills and Dales Park, 2014. (Photograph by the author).

Volunteer Position Available!

Seeking a computer-savvy volunteer to maintain our membership database and print out the mailing labels for the *Historian* every quarter. This position is not time-consuming and would be a great way to help out *The Oakwood Historical Society* from home! Please call *The Society* at 937-299-3793, leave a message and someone will get back with you as soon as possible.

WANTED: Volunteers & Volunteer Coordinators

The Historical Society is looking for a few good people who can help out with events at *The Homestead*. As we have all heard many times, many hands make light work! Please leave a message at *The Historical Society* at 937-299-3793, and someone will return your call to give your more details. We look forward to hearing from you!

The Oakwood Historical Society

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OHS Committees Please get involved!

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Remembering David Smith

A dear friend of *The Oakwood Historical Society* has recently passed. David Smith has been a longtime friend of ours. David was always pleasant and greeted everyone with a kind smile and gentle word. David's artwork has been the face of *The Historical Society* for many years. His pen and ink drawing of *The Long-Romspert Homestead* was our first logo, and his note cards have been used countless times by our board members. In 2015, David participated in our oral history program with Oakwood High School seniors.



He shared his wonderful memories and photo album of his family home as it was being constructed on Hillcrest Avenue. David will be missed by all who knew him.

OAKWOOD HISTORICAL SOCIETY



David's rendition of our logo served TOHS well for many years; unfortunately, only a low quality version remains.



Collecting Memories of Long Term Residents

This is the second year that *The Oakwood Historical Society* has participated in a program in conjunction with volunteer graduating seniors from Oakwood High School. On May 17 and 18, long-time residents were invited to visit the Wright Memorial Library. Here the residents met with students and were recorded on video telling their stories and answering questions on various subjects.

Each interview provided new insights into Oakwood's history and how people lived in the community. *The Oakwood Historical Society* will preserve these oral histories and hopes to continue to build our collection. We would like to thank everyone who participated. It is a very important project, for once the stories of our past are lost, they can never be found again. We hope this tradition can continue in future years as there are still many untold stories in town. If you have a story to share or a treasure trove of Oakwood photos — please contact us!



Photo Shoot Fundraiser: October 9 & 16

With summer just beginning, fall may seem a long way off, but it is never too early to get dates on the calendar for our annual fundraiser. For the same low price as the past five years, you can get a 20 minute photo session with our photographer, Betty Cochran. Bring as many or few people and pets as you like. We have wonderful scenery to use as backdrops for your annual photos. Take a CD with all the photos home with you, and print as many as you like for holiday cards and other special occasions. \$50 per session, includes all photos on a disk. Registration opens on September 18th.



THE OAKWOOD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

1947 Far Hills Avenue Dayton, OH 45419

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED DATED MATERIAL

	orical Society Membership Form
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